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RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 1136
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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR DRL AND SCA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/13/2011

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SUBJECT: SRI LANKA AND MALDIVES: POSITION ON UNGA THIRD
COMMITTEE HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTIONS ON IRAN, BURMA AND DPRK

REF: STATE 117901

¶1. (U) On November 6, Ambassador conveyed reftel points to Sri Lankan Foreign Secretary Palitha Kohona. Ambassador sought Sri Lanka's support and vote for upcoming human rights resolutions in the United Nations General Assembly's Third Committee and stated U.S. opposition to "no-action" motions as a matter of principle. He encouraged the Sri Lankan delegation to join the U.S. in opposing these no-action motions or, at a minimum, to abstain or absent itself during those votes.

¶2. (C) With Kohona out of the country, DCM followed up with MFA Director General for Multilateral Affairs Aurni Wijewardena on November 13. Wijewardena acknowledged that Sri Lanka is reluctant to vote on country-specific human rights resolutions due to the problems it has encountered in international fora on human rights issues. She stated that no decision has been taken on Sri Lanka's vote on the Iran, Burma, and DPRK resolutions. When pressed, she predicted that Sri Lanka will vote the no-action motion on Iran and against the substance of the resolution, as was the case last year. She said that Sri Lanka's ties to Burma as a Buddhist nation would make it hard to oppose Burma in the vote. (Sri Lanka abstained on the substance of the resolution last year in both the Third Committee and the General Assembly.) She did not predict how Sri Lanka would vote on the DPRK resolution, but indicated that Sri Lanka's vote in favor of the substance of the DPRK resolution in the UNGA last year was "unusual" and said she "wasn't sure" if it would be repeated.

¶3. (U) Due to the change in government on November 11 in the Maldives, it has not yet been possible to raise the issue of the country's Third Committee votes with the new foreign minister.

¶4. (C) Comment and Recommendation: Due to Sri Lanka's traditionally close commercial ties and warming political relations with Iran, we assess that there is no prospect of getting even an abstention on the Iran resolution. We do not anticipate doing better than an abstention on Burma. Due to Sri Lanka's own bruising experience on human rights in international fora, we assess, for Sri Lankan support for no-action motions on Iran and Burma as highly likely again this year. Sri Lanka has less at stake with the DPRK, and it is conceivable that they could again vote in favor of the substance of a resolution on the DPRK. If last year is a

guide, Sri Lanka will, however, abstain in the Third Committee. A call from a senior Department official could be useful prior to the DPRK vote in the General Assembly. We do not believe a call would change Sri Lanka's votes on Iran or Burma.
Blake